

Assessment of the Finds from 22-28 High St Agnesgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire (OSA06EV13)

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A small collection of pottery and ceramic building material from an archaeological evaluation carried out by On-Site Archaeology Ltd at 22-28 High St Agnesgate, Ripon, West Yorkshire, was submitted for identification and assessment.

The finds range in date from the medieval period to the 19th century and include no finds which need date earlier than the later 12th or 13th centuries.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

A small quantity of ceramic building material was submitted for identification and assessment. Nine of the fragments have the fine sandy red-firing fabric typical of Ripon ceramic building material but the tenth piece was made in a light-firing clay and has a brown slip. This fragment comes from an oven tile which has a series of pyramidal holes in the base through which circular holes have been pierced cutting through to the top surface of the tile. The tile was made by hand rather than moulded and has the appearance of an underfired, brown-washed stoneware.

Oven tiles of this type were used to form the floor of maltings (a good example of one such was recorded at St Mary's Guildhall, Lincoln, 1991). Barley was spread onto the upper floor of the malt kiln and encouraged to germinate. When most of the grain had sprouted the process was stopped by drying the grain in hot air from a fire located on the floor below. Special oven tiles were used to form the floors of these kilns and most examples appear to be of later 17th to mid 18th century date. As is typical with such tiles, there is no sign of mortar on the tile, which was presumably not secured in position.

Pottery

Medieval

One hundred and twelve sherds of medieval pottery were recorded. Potentially, the earliest of these are York Gritty ware (YG) a whiteware tempered with grit derived from the Millstone Grit. Pottery of this type was being produced in the mid 11th century, presumably including at Potterton, West Yorkshire, 30 miles south of Ripon. There is little typological variation in the York Gritty ware sherds from various sites across Yorkshire (and even further north, in the North East) but a combination of thin section and chemical analysis can be used to identify the Potterton products from other, as yet unknown, sources.

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The most common ware, however, is Northern Gritty ware (NGR). This ware was produced from Coal Measure clays and tempered with a coarse sand which includes Millstone Grit and, probably, other Carboniferous sandstone grains. It has a wider range of colours than YG and a wider range of textures. Two production sites making this ware close to Ripon are known. These are Lumley Farm, Grantley, (Kershaw 1996) which was operating in the late 12th to 13th centuries and Winksley (Bellamy and Le Patourel 1970) which was operating in the 13th to 14th centuries. The sites are in neighbouring parishes and probably indicate a widespread industry exploiting an outcrop of Coal Measure clays in the area. Analysis of samples of pottery from both these sites shows that a wide range of fabrics was produced at each site but that chemical analysis can distinguish the products of the two industries. The Winksley production site also made a white sandy ware which visually is difficult to distinguish from York Glazed ware, which was made in the Hambleton Hills area on the eastern side of the Vale of York (less than 25 miles from Ripon). A few sherds from the High St Agnesgate site are of this type and whilst they are probably Winksley products, York Glazed ware cannot be completely ruled out (WINK/YORK). However, all the sherds are from jars with no sign of glaze and in York Glazed ware, jars are a minor product. A small number of sherds have fabrics which do not contain definite inclusions of Millstone Grit. These have been coded as MEDLOC but since they are mainly similar in colour and texture to the Northern Gritty ware they are probably simply finer examples of that ware. Three sherds have been identified as Brandsby-type ware (BRAN). Although all are of a very specific type, which has a reduced core and outer surface, plain lead glaze and few visible inclusions. This is a type found in Brandsby-type ware but is not the most common type in that industry. Finally, a single sherd comes from a redware vessel with a sand temper, a white slip and copper- mottled lead glaze. Superficially, it looks like Tees Valley Ware, but the sand consists entirely of angular, overgrown grains, whereas Tees Valley Ware normally has a proportion of rounded grains, derived from Permian or Triassic sandstones. Furthermore, white slipped redware vessels were present at Inganthorpe Manor, Wetherby, and were shown by thin section and chemical analysis to be of local origin. The sherd has therefore been coded as NGR/TVW.

Five sherds of Humberware were identified (HUM). This ware was made from silty clays deposited in the Humber wetlands and Humber Estuary in the Quaternary period and at Inganthorpe Manor Humberware (probably made at York) seems to have replaced local wares in the 14th century. Again, however, the High St Agnesgate sherds do not appear typical and it may be that they are a locally-produced equivalent. Thin section and chemical analysis would be able to test this hypothesis.

Most of the medieval sherds (79) come from jars, most of which are definitely wheelthrown. Fourteen sherds come from jugs and 17 sherds could come from either form. A single

example of a bowl and a sherd which comes from either a bowl or a dripping dish complete the assemblage. This high proportion of jars and low number of bowls both suggest an early date (12th to 13th century).

Table 1

cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight
BRAN	JUG/JAR	3	2	37
HUM	JUG	1	1	23
	JUG/JAR	4	4	13
MEDLOC	JAR	6	6	16
	JUG	4	4	16
NGR	BOWL	1	1	2
	BOWL/DRIP	1	1	19
	JAR	30	30	260
	JUG	2	2	27
	JUG/JAR	6	5	47
NGR/TWW	JUG	1	1	3
NYG	JAR	16	16	108
	JUG	2	2	12
	JUG/JAR	4	4	6
WINK/YORK	JAR	3	3	27
	JUG	2	2	10
YG	JAR	24	24	140
	JUG	2	2	5
Grand Total		112	110	771

Post-medieval

Five sherds dating between the 16th and the mid 18th centuries were recorded (Table 2). Four of the sherds come from unknown sources (two sherds of Brownware – BERTH, a sherd of Blackware (BL) and a sherd of Cistercian ware (CSTN). The fifth sherd is of Ryedale ware and comes from the fringes of the North Yorkshire Moors. These sherds probably date to the later 16th to early 17th centuries.

Table 2

cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight
BERTH	JUG/JAR	2	2	13
BL	BOWL/JAR	1	1	107
CSTN	CUP	1	1	2
RYEDALE	BOWL	1	1	29
Grand Total		5	5	151

Early Modern

Eighteen sherds of late 18th-century or later date were recorded (Table 3). Most of these are factory products made from refined clays which cannot easily be attributed to a source (Creamware – CREA; English Porcelains – ENPO; Buff wares – NCBW; Pearlwares – PEAR; and Transfer-Printed wares – TPW). The closest source for these wares is probably Leeds. However, a single sherd of Derbyshire stoneware – DERBS – and three sherds of

Sunderland Coarseware – SUND – were identified and these suggest that more distant potteries should not be discounted. No sherds of types typical of the mid 19th century and later were present whilst both the Derbyshire stoneware and the buff ware are likely to be of 19th rather than 18th century date. The majority of the early modern pottery therefore probably dates to the early 19th century.

Table 3

cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight
CREA	PLATE	1	1	8
DERBS	BOT	1	1	13
ENPO	PLATE	3	1	25
NCBW	BOWL	2	1	13
PEAR	PLATE	1	1	24
	TANK	2	1	8
SUND	BOWL	2	2	44
	JUG/JAR	1	1	17
TPW	PLATE	4	2	34
	TANK/JUG	1	1	34
Grand Total		18	12	220

Assessment

Trench 1

Three sherds of medieval pottery, all NGR jars, were recovered from context 110, a layer of silty sand overlying natural gravel. These cannot be closely dated but are probably later 12th to mid 14th century. The fill of cut 103 (context 105) produced sherds of early 19th century pottery.

Trench 2

Three features cutting natural deposits produced pottery: posthole 205 (context 204); pit 207 (context 206) and pit 209 (context 208). All the features produced northern gritty ware. The two pit fills both produced whitewares of Winksley/York type whilst the whiteslipped green-glazed jug (NGR/TVW) came from pit 209. The pottery therefore gives TPQs for the filling of these features of late 12th century; early 13th century and later 13th century respectively.

A layer of sandy silt, 203, sealed these features and produced a similar assemblage of pottery with the addition of two of the putative Brandsby-type ware sherds. These give a later 13th century or later date for the deposit.

Finally, a layer of clay silt, 202, which overlay context 203, produced four sherds, one of which is post-medieval in date and the other two late 18th century or later.

Trench 3

Layer 304, a sandy silt, produced a small assemblage of medieval pottery, dating deposition to the later 12th century or later.

A subsequent layer of sandy silt, 303, is dated to the late 18th century or late through the presence of a Sunderland coarseware bowl sherd whilst rubble layer, 302, also produced late 18th-century or later pottery.

Trench 4

Pit 405 produced sherds of medieval pottery which date its filling to the late 12th century or later. The overlying sandy silt, 406, produced similar pottery.

Trench 5

A layer of sandy silt, 510, produced 14 sherds of medieval pottery dating its deposition to the later 12th century or later.

An overlying layer of sandy silt, 509, produced a mixed assemblage, the latest sherd in which dates deposition to the late 18th century or later.

Trench 6

Medieval pottery dating to the late 12th century or later was recovered from silty sand layer 626, a layer of redeposited natural, 624, and the fill of F 623 (context 622).

An overlying layer of sandy silt, 611, produced a mixed assemblage of pottery which contains sherds of medieval date, later medieval date and post-medieval date.

Two stratigraphically later deposits, clay silt 602 and the fill of F 610, produced medieval sherds which are presumably residual. Sandy silt layer 607, however, produced the sherd of Derbyshire stoneware and can therefore be dated to the early 19th century or later.

Trench 7

Sandy silt layer 703 produced 19 sherds of medieval pottery dating deposition to the later 12th century or later.

Layer 702, a make up deposit for a tarmac surface, produced a sherd of post-medieval blackware, presumably residual.

Dating and Interpretation

It is very likely that pottery was only rarely used in the Ripon area before the mid 11th century. Archaeological features which contain no datable finds and which can be demonstrated to pre-date those containing medieval pottery might therefore be of any date from the 7th to the early 11th century. The lack of mid Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian pottery should not therefore be interpreted as meaning that the site itself was unoccupied at this time.

The pottery from High St Agnesgate indicates activity on the site at some date between the 13th and the mid 14th centuries although this activity might well have started in the late 12th century. There is no strong evidence for earlier use of pottery on the site and the sherds of

York Gritty ware might easily be contemporary with the Northern Gritty ware. Certainly, most of the York Gritty sherds were found in association with late 12th to 14th-century types.

Only one deposit produced sherds of late medieval date, sandy silt 611 and this deposit itself produced a mixed assemblage. It therefore seems that occupation ceased or declined in intensity in the mid 14th century and the low quantity of post-medieval pottery probably indicates that this situation continued into the 18th century. A change took place in the late 18th or early 19th century with the construction of a tannery on the site. Several deposits in Trench 6 have been interpreted as being related to this tannery. Most of these produced residual medieval finds or ceramic building material of possible post-medieval or later date but all are stratigraphically later than layer 607, which cannot have been deposited until the early 19th century. The finding of an oven tile, evidence for a malting oven of probable 18th-century date, unfortunately comes from the backfill of one of these tannery features and may have been brought from elsewhere in Ripon. Several maltings are recorded in Ripon but all lie at some distance from High St Agnesgate (North Street; Bondgate; Blossomgate; Westgate and Millgate are all listed in Pigot's 1834 directory).

Retention

All of the finds come from stratified deposits and would repay re-examination in more detail. They should all therefore be retained for further study.

Further Work

The most important finds from this site are the 12th to 14th-century pottery assemblages and it would be useful, in refining the dating of the occupation on this site, to test the identifications of the pottery sources put forward here on the basis of a visual study. This would involve thin section and chemical analysis of sherds of York Gritty ware, Northern Gritty ware, Winksley/York whiteware, Brandsby-type ware and Humberware.

Task	Costing	Total
TS and ICPS analysis of York Gritty ware	2 samples at £24.00 plus VAT	£48.00 plus VAT
TS and ICPS analysis of Northern Gritty ware	12 samples at £24.00 plus VAT	£288.00 plus VAT
TS and ICPS analysis of Brandsby-type ware	2 samples at £24.00 plus VAT	£48.00 plus VAT
TS and ICPS analysis of Winksley/York ware	2 samples at £24.00 plus VAT	£48.00 plus VAT
TS and ICPS analysis of Humberware	2 samples at £24.00 plus VAT	£48.00 plus VAT

Total	20 samples at £24.00 plus VAT	£480.00 plus VAT
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Bibliography

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Appendix 1

context	class	DATE	cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Part	Weight	Use	TH	Condition
105	POTTERY	EMOD	ENPO	PLATE	3	1		R-B	25			
105	POTTERY	EMOD	NCBW	BOWL	2	1	INDUST BLUE SLIP INT	BS	13			
105	POTTERY	EMOD	TPW	TANK/JUG	1	1	30 DEC BAND AT BASE; THEN PINK INDUST SLIP	B/H	34			
105	POTTERY	EMOD	TPW	PLATE	1	1		BS	16			
110	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	6	SOOTED EXR; BLACK DEP INT		
110	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	2	2		BS	26	SOOTED EXT		
202	POTTERY	EMOD	PEAR	TANK	2	1		R	8			
202	POTTERY	PMED	RYEDALE	BOWL	1	1		BS	29			
202	POTTERY	EMOD	SUND	BOWL	1	1		BS	3			
203	POTTERY	MED	BRAN	JUG/JAR	2	1		BS	23			
203	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	3	3		BS	9			
203	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		B	36	SOOTED EXT		
203	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JUG/JAR	1	1		BS	5			
203	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1	GLAZE EXT	BS	5	SOOTED EXT		
203	POTTERY	MED	NGR	BOWL	1	1		BS	2			
203	POTTERY	MED	WINK/YORK	JAR	1	1		BS	16	SOOTED EXT		
204	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	13	SOOTED EXT		
204	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1	SPOT OF GLAZE EXT	BS	5	SOOTED EXT		
204	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	2			
206	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	18			ABRA
206	POTTERY	MED	WINK/YORK	JAR	1	1		BS	6			
208	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JAR	1	1		BS	1	SOOTED EXT		
208	POTTERY	MED	NGR/TVW	JUG	1	1	WHITE SLIP; CU GLAZE	BS	3			

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context	class	DATE	cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Part	Weight	Use	TH	Condition
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JAR	1	1		BS	5	SOOTED EXT; WHITE DEP INT		
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JUG	1	1		BS	1			
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JAR	9	9		BS	64	SOOTED EXT		
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JAR	1	1	GLAZE INT	BS	1	SOOTED EXT		
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JUG	1	1		BS	11			
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JAR	3	3		BS	8			
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JUG/JAR	1	1	TWO HORIZ GROOVES; DROP OF GLAZE	BS	1			
208	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JUG/JAR	1	1	DROPS OF GLAZE	BS	1			
208	POTTERY	MED	WINK/YORK	JUG	1	1		BS	3			
208	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	3	3		BS	8			
208	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	2	2		BS	9	SOOTED EXT		
302	POTTERY	EMOD	CREA	PLATE	1	1		R	8			
302	POTTERY	EMOD	PEAR	PLATE	1	1		B	24			
302	POTTERY	EMOD	SUND	BOWL	1	1		B	41			
303	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	5			
303	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JUG/JAR	1	1		BS	4			
303	POTTERY	EMOD	SUND	JUG/JAR	1	1	GLAZE INT/EXT; BASE 36 DIA	B	17			
304	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JUG	1	1	VERT STRIP; CUGL MOTTLED	BS	7			
304	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JAR	1	1		BS	1	SOOTED EXT		
304	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	2	2		BS	11			
304	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		B	33	SOOTED EXT		
304	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	1	1		BS	7	SOOTED EXT		
304	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	1	1		R	22			
403	POTTERY	MED	YG	JUG	2	2		BS	5			
404	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	2	2		BS	7	SOOTED EXT; BLACK DEP INT		

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context	class	DATE	cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Part	Weight	Use	TH	Condition
406	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	2			
509	POTTERY	PMED	BERTH	JUG/JAR	1	1		BS	6			
509	POTTERY	MED	BRAN	JUG/JAR	1	1		BS	14			
509	POTTERY	PMED	CSTN	CUP	1	1		BS	2			
509	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		R	12	SOOTED EXT RIM		
509	POTTERY	EMOD	TPW	PLATE	3	1		B	18			
510	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JUG	1	1	WAVY COMBING	BS	5			
510	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	2			
510	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JUG/JAR	2	1		BS	28			
510	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		R	8			
510	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JUG	1	1	THUMBED BASE	B	14			
510	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JUG	1	1		BS	13			
510	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	2	2		BS	10			
510	POTTERY	MED	WINK/YORK	JAR	1	1		BS	5			
510	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	2	2		BS	15	SOOTED EXT		
510	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	2	2		BS	8			
602	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1		BS	12	SOOTED EXT		
607	POTTERY	EMOD	DERBS	BOT	1	1		BS	13			
609	CBM	PMED	M/PMTIL	BRICK	1	1		BS	284		47	
609	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JUG	2	2		BS	4			
609	CBM	PMED	PMTIL	PANT	1	1		BS	6			
609	CBM	PMED	PMTIL	BRICK	2	2		BS	29			
609	CBM	PMED	PMTIL	MALTING OVEN TILE	1	1	SALT GLAZED STONE WARE; PUNCHED 4 HOLES, SCOOPED OUT OF BACK	BS	119			
611	POTTERY	PMED	BERTH	JUG/JAR	1	1		BS	7			
611	POTTERY	MED	HUM	JUG	1	1		BS	23			

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context	class	DATE	cname	Form	Nosh	NoV		Description	Part	Weight	Use	TH	Condition
611	POTTERY	MED	HUM	JUG/JAR	4	4			BS	13			
611	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JAR	1	1	HM		BS	8	SOOTED EXT		
611	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1			BS	6	SOOTED EXT		
611	POTTERY	MED	WINK/YORK	JUG	1	1			BS	7			
611	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	1	1			BS	1			
611	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	1	1			BS	1	SOOTED EXT		
612	CBM	PMED	PMTIL	PANT	1	1			BS	143			
622	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JUG/JAR	1	1			BS	3			
622	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JAR	1	1			B	29	SOOTED EXT		
622	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JAR	1	1			BS	1	SOOTED EXT		
622	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	1	1			BS	2			
624	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JAR	1	1			BS	2	SOOTED EXT		
626	CBM	MED	MTIL	FLOOR	1	1			BS	181			
626	POTTERY	MED	NYG	JUG/JAR	1	1			BS	1			
702	POTTERY	PMED	BL	BOWL/JAR	1	1	GLAZE INT/EXT		B	107			
703	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JAR	1	1			BS	2			
703	POTTERY	MED	MEDLOC	JAR	1	1			BS	2			
703	CBM	MED	MTIL	BRICK	2	1			BS	8			
703	POTTERY	MED	NGR	BOWL/DRIP	1	1			BS	19			
703	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	1	1			BS	8	SOOTED EXT		
703	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JAR	3	3			BS	24			
703	POTTERY	MED	NGR	JUG/JAR	2	2			BS	10			
703	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	6	6			BS	45	SOOTED EXT		
703	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	1	1			BS	1			
703	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	2	2			R	17			
703	POTTERY	MED	YG	JAR	1	1			BS	4	SOOTED EXT; BLACK		

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context	class	DATE	cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Part	Weight	Use	TH	Condition
704	CBM	MED	MTIL	FLAT	1	1		BS	244	DEP INT		